DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 237 396 SO 015 100

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TITLE Cultural Adjustment Difficulties of Japanese Adolescents Sojourning in the U.S.A. Occasional Papers in Intercultural Learning No. 5.
SPONS AGENCY AFS International/Intercultural Programs, Inc., New York, N.Y.
PUB DATE Nov 83
NOTE 26p.; Article derived from the author's Master of Arts thesis, University of California-Los Angeles.
AVAILABLE FROM Editor, Occasional Papers in Intercultural Learning, AFS International/Intercultural Programs, Inc., 313 East 43rd Street, New York, NY 10017.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Communication Problems; Cultural Awareness; Cultural Differences; Culture Conflict; English (Second Language); Family Life; *Foreign Students; High Schools; International Educational Exchange; Interpersonal Relationship; Language Skills; *Student Adjustment; Student Exchange Programs; *Student Reaction; Student Teacher Relationship; *Study Abroad
IDENTIFIERS *Japanese People

ABSTRACT

The adjustment difficulties of Japanese high school students studying in the United States were examined in order to create a framework for the construction of orientation materials for exchange students. A total of 106 Japanese students enrolled in U.S. senior high schools as participants in the AFS Year Program to the United States completed a Japanese language questionnaire which asked them to rate and comment on 54 items describing potential adjustment problems. This report lists the questionnaire items and summarizes the student comments according to the U.S. culture in general, school life and peers, family life, and the use of English. Results indicate that for the students the most difficult aspects of living in America included knowing appropriate topics to talk about, understanding the way Americans showed emotions and American humor, making friends with other students, and getting used to the informal relationships between students and teachers. In general, there were few problems regarding the students' relationship with the host parents and children. However, when problems did arise, it was extremely difficult for the students to discuss them with the host family. Most students felt that they had not had adequate training in oral English. (RM)

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NO. 5
Occasional Papers in Intercultural Learning
NOVEMBER 1983

ED237396

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Cultural Adjustment Difficulties of Japanese Adolescents Sojourning in the U.S.A.

by: Elizabeth Ann Hartung

SO 015100

A Publication of AFS International/Intercultural Programs, Inc.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE OF AFS INTERNATIONAL

AFS volunteers and professional staff throughout the world are moving towards the goal of peace by stimulating an awareness of mankind's common humanity, a wider understanding of the diverse cultures of the world, and a concern for the global issues confronting society. They acknowledge that peace is a dynamic concept threatened by injustices both between and within nations.

In pursuit of this goal, the core of the AFS experience has been the promotion of relationships in which families, communities, groups and maturing young persons from different cultural backgrounds share new learning situations related to the purposes of AFS. In addition, through experience and experimentation, AFS has developed and continues to encourage new models and opportunities for exchange that will be beneficial for the development of society.

AFS does not affiliate with any religious, political or partisan group, but it believes in the value of participating in a continuous process of interaction between cultures both across and within boundaries.

AFS encourages all participants to involve themselves in situations in which they can apply and project their AFS experience.

INTRODUCTION

In our attempts to insure that the *Occasional Papers* would reach everyone likely to be interested in them, we have taken the liberty to add names to our mailing list in the absence of a direct request from the individuals involved. If you are one of the people who began receiving the *Papers* for no apparent reason, we want you to know that we are sending them to you because we believed that you would find them useful. But anyone on our mailing list may ask to be removed from the list at any time. All that is required is a brief letter or postcard addressed to the Research Department, AFS International, 313 East 43rd Street, New York, New York 10017, USA.

One of the functions of the AFS Research Department is to assist graduate students and other researchers anywhere in the world who are working on projects of timely interest to AFS International. Over the past few years we have been helpful to students at Ohio State University, the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA), Michigan State University, the University of Illinois at Champaign, and the School for International Training (Brattleboro, Vermont); in addition, we recently began a project in conjunction with a professor at the University of Minnesota. In this fifth *Occasional Paper*, we are publishing an article based on the research of the graduate student at the University of California, Elizabeth Ann Hartung. Elizabeth also worked as an intern for the Research Department during the summer of 1982, so we feel a special sense of pride in sharing a portion of her very interesting and useful study with our readers.

CULTURAL ADJUSTMENT DIFFICULTIES OF JAPANESE ADOLESCENTS SOJOURNING IN THE U.S.A.

Elizabeth Ann Hartung
University of California -- Los Angeles

Editors' Introduction: The following article is derived from the Master of Arts thesis of Elizabeth Ann Hartung, a graduate student in the TESL[1] Department of UCLA. The research undertaken by Ms. Hartung for her masters project was assisted by the Research Department of AFS International. Her subjects were 106 Japanese secondary-level students who participated in the AFS Year Program to the United States during 1981-82; each student's U.S. host parents and a high school teacher (one selected by the student) also were subjects. In her thesis, Ms. Hartung treats the adjustment difficulties of the Japanese students from the points of view of the host families and high school teachers as well as of the students themselves; she also analyzes the difficulties of the five least adjusted students in her sample. In this Occasional Paper, *Ms. Hartung reports her findings and offers her analyses of the responses of the 106 students to a Japanese language questionnaire that they completed during the latter portion of their sojourn in the United States.*

In her Introduction, Ms. Hartung describes the objectives of her study in the following words:

> The purpose of this study is to create a framework for the construction of orientation materials for Japanese high school students planning to come to America for one-year homestay programs. Specifically, the following research questions are addressed: (1) Are there identifiable socio-cultural situations which cause special stress for Japanese high school students living in America on a one-year homestay program? (2) How do these student-identified situations compare with the stressful situations identified by the students' American host families and teachers? (3) What should pre-departure orientation materials cover to help students become aware of potential conflicts with American culture?

As part of her masters project, Ms. Hartung has developed, on the basis of her research findings, a culture assimilator of some twenty

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[1] *TESL stands for "Teaching English as a Second Language."*

items that will be pilot-tested during the Spring, 1984, pre-departure orientation of Japanese AFS students coming to the United States.

Elizabeth Ann Hartung is a specialist in the teaching of English as a second language who spent four years (1977-1981) in Japan as an instructor at Kobe Jogakuin, located in Nishinomiya. While in Japan she counseled exchange students who were living there and became acquainted with the orientation procedures of AFS/Japan; it was during this time that she developed her interest in cross-cultural adjustment difficulties. Ms. Hartung also has taught in Hawaii, California, and Washington, DC, and is presently employed by the Long Beach Unified School District in California.

Those who wish to obtain a complete copy of Ms. Hartung's masters thesis should proceed as follows: Write to UCLA Library Photo Services, Room 34, Powell Library, 405 Hilgard Avenue, Los Angeles, California 90024, USA. Ask to be mailed a copy of the masters thesis entitled Difficulties in Cultural Adjustment and Implications for Orientation of Japanese High School Students Living in America *(1983) by Elizabeth Ann Hartung. Send no advance payment; you will be billed. The price will not be less than $30.00 U.S.*

INTRODUCTION[2]

High school English teaching in Japan is primarily directed towards preparation for college entrance examinations that test mostly grammar and translation skills. As Kitao explains, "The purpose of learning English in Japan is not for communicating with English-speaking people."[3] The required high school English textbooks seldom deal with communicative language skills and are just beginning to include cultural information. The teachers often do not have the time for research and materials development in these areas. Information that would be helpful for high school students going to the United States on anything more than a prepared tour is not easily accessible. Therefore, this project fills a need in this area of English teaching as well as in the field of socio-cultural learning in Japan. The results of this study also will help foreign student advisors,

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[2]*Editors' note: This introductory material is taken from sections of Ms. Hartung's thesis other than the chapter in which she analyses the responses of the students.*

[3]Kitao, Kenji. *Japanese exchange students' evaluation of English teaching in Japan.* Paper presented at the 14th TESOL Convention by Professor J. White; written 1979.

orientation leaders, exchange program administrators, and U.S. host family members and high school teachers who come into contact with Japanese students who are involved in an intercultural homestay in the United States.

It should be noted that the samples used in this study are not wholly representative of either U.S. or Japanese society. However, within the context of an intercultural homestay program of this type, some generalizations certainly can be made from these findings. Because the participants were very concerned about the day-to-day living skills inherent in a homestay experience, the practical and communicative aspects of culture emerged as especially important in the data. Elements of "high culture" (such as literature, music, art, and architecture) were not explicitly investigated.

The subjects for this study fell into three groups -- Japanese students, U.S. host families, and U.S. high school teachers -- only the first of which will be dealt with here. During the 1981-82 program year, there were 117 Japanese high school students who participated in a one-year homestay program in the United States under the auspices of AFS International/Intercultural Programs. These students all had gone through the AFS screening process; this included the completion of a lengthy application form as well as an examination of English language ability, and two personal interviews with representatives of AFS/Japan. The students also participated in a weekend predeparture orientation program in Tokyo, and in a post-arrival orientation in California before going on to their respective host families in more than half of the 50 States.

STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

All of the students in this study arrived in the United States in July 1981, and all except two were either 17 or 18 years old. Of the 106 respondents, 31 were male and 75 were female. This imbalance is partly because females in Japan are more likely than males to study languages or any of the humanities, and also because of the extra pressure exerted on males in Japanese society to perform well on the college entrance examination. Males, therefore, are less likely than females to "take a year off" from the many years of preparation, especially so close to examination time.[4] For most Japanese students, the year abroad does not move them forward in their overall schooling.

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[4] In addition, AFS/U.S. requests that the national office in countries sending students to the United States accept more girls than boys since more of the U.S. host families want to host girls than want to host boys.

All but one of the students in this study were placed in the 12th grade in their host schools. Nine students in the study attended ESL (English as a Second Language) classes in their U.S. high schools. Since it is not known whether other students' schools offered ESL classes, it can only be noted that most of the Japanese students apparently were expected to survive in regular U.S. high school classes without being enrolled in special instruction.

Nearly two-thirds of the students volunteered information that they had had an American teacher while in Japan. (No question about this was specifically asked.) This statistic can be seen to indicate that many of the students in this study were from Japanese private schools because it is very rare for a foreigner to teach in Japanese public schools. ("Teacher" would not necessarily be restricted to the students' normal classroom situation, so it could mean that they had had an American teacher either as a private tutor or at a commercial language school, both of which are fashionable.) Japanese private schools often include both a high school and a college. If a student is accepted into the high school of such an institution and continues in its college, he or she does not have to take the college entrance examination. This would make it easier for private school students to participate in an exchange program since they do not have to worry about studying for an entrance examination.

About half of the students indicated that they had some sort of American friend, even if only a pen-friend, before leaving Japan. Friendly interaction with Americans was not entirely new for these students.

One-fourth of the students stated that they had been to the United States prior to their AFS homestay. Most visits had lasted only a few days. Less than one-fourth of the students had been to a foreign country other than the U.S., usually as part of a brief tour. Therefore, for almost all of the students, actually living in another country for an extended time was a new experience. Some of the students may have wanted to come because of prior exposure to the U.S. as a tourist.

Almost two-thirds indicated that at least one of their natural parents had been abroad. Usually their father had traveled on business. Most other instances involved a short tour. It is difficult, based on this little information, to know whether or how parental overseas experience influenced the students' cross-cultural interest and understanding.

In the students' natural families there were usually one or two brothers or sisters, with never more than three other children in the same family. Fourteen students indicated that they were only children. The students were accustomed to living with few siblings, that being the norm in Japan.

Three-fourths stated that their homes in Japan were in suburbs or in cities. This correlates with the fact that many indicated that their natural fathers were businessmen. However, 85% of the students reported that in the U.S. they were living in a small town or in the country. Therefore, they had to adjust not only to changes between Japan and the U.S., but also to changes between urban and small town or rural lifestyles.

The demographic data indicated that the students tended to come from upper-middle to upper socio-economic backgrounds in Japan.

STUDENT ITEM RANKINGS

In the questionnaire, the students were presented with 54 items describing potential adjustment problems. The students were asked to rate, on a six-point Likert scale from "no difficulty" to "very difficult," the amount of difficulty they were having in the U.S. with respect to each item. Each item included lines for individual comments, and many students took the opportunity to write comments about some or all of the items.

Table 1 presents the ranked results of these items. The list starts with those items that describe behavior most difficult for the students to master and ends with the least difficult. For example, "Knowing appropriate topics to talk about" was the most problematic behavior for the students; "Making friends with other students" was the next most difficult behavior. The item describing the least difficult behavior was "Being with friends who want you to drink alcohol."

The first column of Table 1 shows the rank order of each item. The second column describes the questionnaire item as it appeared on the questionnaire. The third column provides the mean of the Likert-scale scores for the item; this score indicates the degree of difficulty caused by the behavior. If the same score was received for two items, the calculations were carried out to the next decimal and the item with the higher score was listed first.

This ranking provides a framework for guiding U.S. host families of Japanese high school students, teachers who have these students in their classes, and leaders of orientation and cross-cultural training programs for such students. The information also gives a proper perspective to the discussions which follow.

Eight items on Table 1 had mean scores of over 3.0, including one item with a score of 4.0, indicating a relatively great degree of difficulty. The largest difference between mean scores of items of consecutive ranking occurred with the items ranked 1st and 2nd and the items ranked 53rd and 54th. Thus the first item represents an extremely difficult aspect of living in America, while the last item reflects a very easy aspect.

Table 1

Difficulty of Behavior as Perceived by the Students

Total number of respondents: 106
1 - no difficulty . . . 6 - very difficult

Rank	Questionnaire Item	Mean
1	Knowing appropriate topics to talk about	4.0
2	Making friends with other students	3.6
3	Telling members of the host family about distressing matters in the family situation	3.6
4	Using the English language	3.6
5	Getting along with the host children of the same sex	3.3
6	Establishing a dependency relationship (amae)	3.2
7	Knowing when someone is really a friend	3.1
8	Seeing students holding and kissing each other	3.0
9	Understanding American humor	2.9
10	Understanding the way Americans show emotions	2.9
11	Understanding the host parents' behavior towards the host children	2.8
12	Finding a good place to study at home	2.8
13	Understanding student behavior in the classroom	2.8
14	Refusing an invitation	2.8
15	Accepting criticism from a host family member	2.8
16	Finding enough time to study at home	2.8
17	Understanding the sexual attitudes of friends of the opposite sex	2.7
18	Describing Japanese things to students	2.7
19	Understanding the host children's behavior towards host parents	2.7
20	Feeling comfortable at parties	2.7
21	Asking a teacher about something confusing	2.7
22	Understanding dating customs	2.6
23	Going to bed at a certain time	2.6
24	Expressing disagreement with someone	2.6
25	Having someone to eat lunch with at school	2.6

Table 1 continued

Rank	Questionnaire Item	Mean
26	Getting along with people of many cultural and racial backgrounds	2.6
27	Understanding the sexual attitudes of friends of the same sex	2.5
28	Asking a student about something confusing	2.5
29	Making friends with people outside of school	2.5
30	Understanding the independence of American teenagers	2.5
31	Enjoying leisure-time activities with the host family	2.4
32	Understanding American attitudes towards foreigners	2.4
33	Describing Japanese things to the host family	2.4
34	Following the daily routine of the host family	2.4
35	Understanding teacher behavior in the classroom	2.3
36	Getting along with the host mother	2.3
37	Going to and from school	2.3
38	Deciding what to wear to school	2.2
39	Following the rules of the host family	2.2
40	Getting along with host children of the opposite sex	2.2
41	Understanding the host children's behavior towards each other	2.1
42	Understanding the American attitude towards physical fitness	2.1
43	Understanding the way Americans treat old people	2.1
44	Getting along with the host father	2.1
45	Understanding the relationship between the host parents	1.9
46	Handling differences concerning the host family's religious beliefs	1.8
47	Understanding the rules of the school	1.8
48	Eating food prepared by the host family	1.8
49	Doing assigned household chores	1.7
50	Being with friends who want you to take drugs	1.7
51	Using the table manners of the host family	1.7
52	Coping with crime and violence in the host community	1.7
53	Understanding the grading system in school	1.6
54	Being with friends who want you to drink alcohol	1.3

STUDENT COMMENTS

This section summarizes the comments and suggestions in response to the items on the student questionnaire. The material is arranged according to the following topics: U.S. culture in general; school life and peers; family life; and the use of English.

U.S. Culture in General

The students experienced both major and minor difficulties in areas that transcended the specifics of using English and living with Americans in the contexts of home and school. These difficulties involved misunderstandings and communication with Americans in general. Since it is often hard for people to look objectively at basic characteristics of their own culture and to realize that these are not universal, misunderstandings at this level are serious and not easily overcome because the need for flexibility is not perceived. Although U.S. culture is heterogeneous, certain basic characteristics can be noted, such as the American sense of individualism. The two areas pertaining to U.S. culture in general that were mentioned by the students were communication at the cultural level and living in a heterogeneous culture.

Communication at the Cultural Level

The students felt that the most difficult aspect of living in America was knowing appropriate topics to talk about. The questionnaire item pertaining to this issue received an extremely high mean score of 4.0, more than .4 higher than the item ranked 2nd. There were 45 respondents who circled either 5 or 6. While some students were limited in their choice of topics because of a lack of English skills, most of the students did not know what to talk about or when to speak. The most typical response to this item was, "Keeping silent is not a bad thing in Japan, but here people think I am strange." The Japanese hesitance towards straightforward expressiveness is an important factor in explaining this response. Other factors involved are the Japanese fear of making mistakes (in this case with their topic choice and their English) and thus losing face, and the historical Buddhist and Confucian distrust for using words to express feelings. Historians write about the "Japanese "suspicion of verbal skills, their confidence in nonverbal understanding, their desire for consensus decisions and their eagerness to avoid personal confrontation."[5] This distrust of verbal skills is not because of some deficiency in the Japanese language, but rather a culturally-based feeling. Another

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[5]Reischauer, Edwin O. *The Japanese*. Charles E. Tuttle: Tokyo, 1978. p. 386.

problem the students had with choosing an appropriate topic to talk about was the feeling that, especially when speaking to American peers, they had no common interests. Many wrote, "It is easier to talk to American adults than to American adolescents."

Most students found it hard to understand the way Americans showed emotions. The related questionnaire item was ranked 10th and the mean score was 2.9. Students wrote that, although they had been aware of American directness through the media and stereotyped images, they still had problems coping with the behavior. Comments such as, "Americans cannot control their emotions," "Their emotions are so exaggerated," and "Americans get angry so easily" indicated the students' attitude towards this aspect of American culture. Students also complained about constant bickering within the host family and amongst their friends. In Japan, people who show their emotions too freely are not thought of positively because it is felt that they cannot control themselves. For many students, showing emotions the way Americans do was not a desirable goal. One student summed up this sentiment by writing, "I can understand the way Americans show their emotions but I do not want to behave like that."

Since the students indicated that they disliked direct confrontations and the way Americans showed emotions, it was not surprising that they experienced difficulty expressing disagreement with someone (the related questionnaire item was ranked 24th). For some this was a language problem but others indicated that they were not brave enough to give their own opinion, even when they felt strongly about it. There were students who seemed surprised to discover that "Americans do not hate each other even if they have different opinions." This comment points to the Japanese tendency to take any kind of disagreement personally.

Living in a Heterogeneous Culture

American humor was perplexing to the students. Their comments did not center around linguistic difficulties but rather around the nature of the humor itself. The related questionnaire item was ranked 9th. Students wrote that "American humor is designed to make others feel foolish" (for example, practical jokes) and complained that "so much of it is ethnically oriented." They saw this as childish behavior that made them uncomfortable and took a long time to understand.

Some students had difficulty getting along with people from a variety of cultural and racial backgrounds and understanding the way Americans feel towards foreigners; the associated questionnaire items ranked 26th and 32nd, respectively. This reaction was not surprising given the homogeneous nature of Japanese society. While the students did not like being the subjects of ethnic or racial humor in the U.S., many did find such a blending of cultures and races to be perplexing yet interesting. One student wrote, "The term 'foreigner' does not make any sense to an American," and another stated, "Americans do not

seem to be nervous around foreigners." Foreign residents are not common in Japan and they are usually conspicuous in appearance and manner. However, in many places in the U.S., a heterogeneous country, such differences go relatively unnoticed. Students expressed the strain they felt when they encountered Americans who did not like Japanese for economic or historical reasons. Since controversial or unpleasant topics would rarely, if ever, be raised by a Japanese speaking to a foreigner in Japan, the students were surprised and had no idea how to handle these situations or answer related questions. Many wrote, "I do not know how to answer questions about World War II."

School Life and Peers

In the analysis of items relating to school life and peers, four main areas of interest arose: social relationships in school; classroom behavior of students; classroom behavior of teachers; and school life in general.

Social Relationships in School

Making friends with other students was an area of serious concern to the students of this study, as it is to any teenager. The questionnaire item relating to this issue was ranked 2nd with a mean score of 3.6. For many students this was a very difficult matter (37 students circled 5 or 6), and for others it was not (39 students circled 1 or 2).

Many problems surfaced from the comments written about making student friends in the United States. One problem concerned English. A lack of confidence in spoken English plus feelings of no common interests made the Japanese hesitant to speak to other students. Thus there were comments such as "My English is poor" and "I have nothing to say to them." The U.S. school system itself was seen by many respondents to contribute to their difficulty. Many wrote, "The time between classes was too short to talk to anyone." Changing classrooms every hour also hindered their time for social relationships. The students wrote, "I am in classes with different students each hour and this makes it hard to get to know anyone." In the Japanese school system, the same group of students has all classes together throughout the year, with the exception of a rare elective class.

Many students reported that the American students already had "their own group of friends" and that it was difficult to be accepted into these well-established student groups. They did not seem to be prepared for the special groups that prevailed amongst the seniors, although such cliques also exist in Japanese high schools. Perhaps this difficulty is related to the common complaint that very few of the American students were interested in the fact that the Japanese students were from another country. The respondents had expected to

be treated as exchange students in Japan are treated, that is, with a great deal of interest and attention. But many wrote, "I am not considered special." Some said that they had friends, but those friendships with American high school students were shallow.

The students felt it was difficult to know when someone in America was really a friend. "Everybody, even strangers, seems so open but yet it is not easy to know their true character." The corresponding item was ranked 7th in difficulty, but there was a lack of homogeneity of response: 24 students circled 5 or 6 while 46 students circled 1 or 2. The students had to learn that, just because someone talked to them, it did not necessarily mean that they were a friend, as it probably would indicate in Japan.

Perhaps the students expected to form friendships quickly because of the stereotyped image of the "friendly, open American" that exists in Japan. To gain friends, many students noted that they had joined some club (for example, the band, choir, or sports club) at their U.S. high school. Many also gained friends through their host brother or host sister. However, some warned that it was not always good merely to follow their host sibling; furthermore, sometimes there was not a host sibling in the same school. At first it was hard for the Japanese students to find someone to eat lunch with (the associated item ranked 25th), but many wrote, "This problem took care of itself as I gradually made friends."

It was difficult for a newcomer to make friends unless he or she initiated conversations. Comments made by students such as "I had to speak up" and "I must be brave" demonstrated how formidable a task it was for them to be the initiators. They often tried to talk about Japanese things to other students but their lack of confidence in spoken English and the inherent difficulty in describing an object or concept which does not exist in the host culture were major problems. The questionnaire item relating to this issue was ranked 18th. Examples of students' feelings about attempting such descriptions were:

a. Americans do not know much about Japan.
b. Most American teenagers do not pay any attention to things about Japan.
c. It is hard to explain about Japanese religion.
d. They made fun of Japanese things.
e. Some are only interested in samurai, geisha, and karate.
f. I was disgusted by stupid questions such as "Do you have dogs and cats in Japan?" and "Can Japanese drive cars?"

The Japanese teenagers were particularly interested in understanding the sexual attitudes and dating customs of their peers. It was easier for the respondents to understand the sexual attitudes of those of the same sex than those of the opposite sex; the related items ranked 27th and 17th, respectively. However, this is likely to be true of all teenagers. Many of the respondents never had been on a

date in Japan or in the U.S. A few stated, "I cannot understand the American dating customs at all," and some wrote, "There is no difference from the Japanese style." This questionnaire item was ranked 22nd. Perhaps this matter depended a great deal on the particular student's experience and environment in his or her home country and in the U.S. Some respondents commented on how often American students changed boyfriends or girlfriends, and a few girls who had come from Japanese girls' schools wrote, "I am afraid of American boys." Many of the students in this study reacted negatively towards seeing American students hugging and kissing each other in the halls. This item was ranked 8th in difficulty with a mean score of 3.0. Comments like "I was shocked at first," "I cannot understand it even now," "It gives me bad feelings when I see it," and "I hate seeing it" were common. This type of behavior between students seldom occurs in Japan.

When the Japanese students went to parties given by American students, they were often uncomfortable; the corresponding questionnaire item ranked 20th. A total of 15 of the respondents circled either 5 or 6. Some of the students stated, "I do not know how to behave at parties," and others wrote, "I do not know how to dance." Some students said that it all depended on the particular party and how much alcohol there was. Almost all students declared that they had no friends who indulged in drinking alcohol or taking illegal drugs (the latter is forbidden by AFS rules). Out of the 106 respondents, only 79 circled a response for the item about being with friends who wanted the respondent to drink alcohol (this item ranked 54th, the last), while an even smaller number, 63, circled a number for the similar item relating to drugs (this item ranked 50th). Students who failed to circle a response usually wrote under the item, "No such friends." However, there is a difference of .4 in the mean scores (alcohol mean score = 1.3; drug item mean score = 1.7) indicating a moderately higher degree of difficulty in being around friends who wanted the respondents to take drugs. The drug item also had a much greater variation in scores than the alcohol item.[6] The homogeneous response to the latter may indicate that the students were accustomed to handling this problem in Japan. Thus they were prepared for such circumstances. However, illegal drugs are practically nonexistent in Japan and there was quite a variety in the way the students answered the drug item. Two explanations are plausible: either the students were not uniformly prepared for contact with the drug problem or their diverse locations in the U.S. differed as to the severity of the drug problem.

The students, contrary to the expectations of the author, were not surprised at the independence of American teenagers. This item was ranked 30th, a moderate ranking in relation to the rest of the items on the questionnaire. Many of the respondents asked rhetorically, "Are they [American teenagers] really independent?" There were many

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[6]The standard deviation of the drug item was 1.4, while that of the alcohol item was .8 (the lowest of all 54 standard deviations).

comments that American teenagers were childish and selfish and were independent only in an economic sense. Few high school students in Japan have part-time jobs because their main responsibility is to pass the college entrance examinations. Therefore, anything that interferes with their studying is uncommon.

Appropriate dress is a factor in being socially accepted in any culture, and is of special concern to teenagers. The item relating to decisions about what to wear to school ranked 38th. Although not an especially troublesome problem, many commented, "Because I wore uniforms in Japan, it is tiresome to have to decide what to wear each day." Almost every Japanese school, public or private, requires that students wear a uniform. Thus there is no competition for the most stylish clothes nor any decision-making involved. At first, many students did not know what was appropriate to wear to school in the U.S. Soon they realized that jeans and other informal clothes were the attire acceptable to their peers. Many students wished they had brought more jeans from Japan as well as some larger clothes since they were gaining weight eating American food.

Understanding school life and getting along with American students were important issues, especially in light of the fact that many respondents wrote, "I seldom make friends with people outside of school, except for other AFS students." However, the item about making friends outside of school ranked only 29th in spite of the fact that 20% of the respondents circled 5 or 6.

Classroom Behavior of Students

The classroom behavior of American students was a topic that evoked strong feelings from the respondents; the corresponding item ranked 13th, and there was relatively little variation in the responses. The basic attitude was reflected in this comment: "American students talk with teachers as if they were friends. I am just beginning to get used to this informality." This points to the difference in student-teacher relationships between the U.S. and Japan. Unlike Americans, the Japanese have rigid and distinct role expectations for both teachers and students. Statements about American students such as "They chew gum in class," "They do not even bring pencils or books to class," and "They act like elementary school students" showed that classroom informality was perceived by the students as being childish and irresponsible.

It was easier for the Japanese to ask the other students in the class about something confusing than to ask the teacher; the related items ranked 28th and 21st, respectively. The difficulty lay in the fact that in the U.S., students leave the classroom immediately after class finishes, making it hard for them to find time to ask questions of the teacher.

Classroom Behavior of Teachers

Understanding the classroom behavior of American teachers posed no serious problem for the students (the associated item ranked 35th), but many complained that the teachers were too informal. Students wrote, "I am surprised to see teachers drinking coffee and chewing gum in class." Some felt the teacher could not control the class. However, they were often impressed with the teachers' ability to elicit ideas from students. One respondent wrote, "American education is to promote students' creativity and this is greatly different from our education, which promotes cramming." Some felt American teachers were friendly and easy to talk with. But they were hesitant to ask questions of the teachers because of their inadequate English ability and fear of interrupting the classroom procedure. In Japan, students are not often encouraged to ask questions during lectures and do not like being singled out in class. Many respondents stated, "It is easier to ask the teacher questions after class." This is acceptable behavior in Japan. But, as noted earlier, after-class question-asking tends to be difficult in the U.S.

School Life in General

Students had no problem in understanding the U.S. grading system, even though Japanese schools usually use a number system of one to ten in grading students. The related item was ranked next to the last in difficulty. The students easily understood the rules of the U.S. high school (the corresponding item ranked 47th), perhaps because, as a majority of them commented, "There seem to be no rules." However, many were troubled by the use of a hall pass whenever they wished to leave the classroom, for example, to go to the bathroom. In Japan, students leave the classroom on an honor system so no form of pass is necessary. The respondents were surprised that some schools had student smoking areas. Having a locker was also a new experience for many. But generally the students were used to the much more rule-oriented Japanese high schools, which accounts for the consistently low marks for this item on the questionnaire.

Students were initially confused about the school bus system and were surprised that the buses left for home right after school. Many missed the bus home the first day because they thought that, as in Japan, students would stay after school to talk with teachers or participate in clubs. The item relating to going to and from school every day, which ranked 37th, raised many comments about the lack of public transportation in the United States. The students were used to the efficient train, bus, and subway systems of Japan and found it difficult to adjust to the transportation problems of the U.S. and to asking their host family to take them places. The author expected comments to be made regarding the crime rate, especially when referring to public transportation, because of the low crime rate in Japan. However, no such comments were made. Perhaps the students had not encountered such incidences or perhaps they were prepared for crime because of the popularity of U.S. movies and television shows in Japan. The item relating to this issue ranked very low in difficulty (52nd).

Family Life

The student's ability to get along well with the host family was a crucial factor in determining the success of the one-year home-stay experience. The host family's home was where most of the student's time was spent and where the more personal differences between Japanese and U.S. lifestyles became evident. The main areas of interest dealing with this topic were: understanding the members of the host family; and fitting in with the daily routine of the host family.

Understanding the Members of the Host Family

It was extremely difficult for the students to tell members of the host family about distressing matters in the family situation. This was an important aspect of the intercultural experience that the students felt did not improve over the course of time. The related questionnaire item was ranked 3rd in difficulty with a mean score of 3.6. However, the variation in the responses was greater than for any other item in the study (24 of the students circled 6 and 18 circled 1).[7] This issue was not always a problem, but when it was an issue it was quite serious.

Numerous students wrote, "I try not to say anything if something in the family bothers me." Those who did say something stated that it was a big decision for them to make. Many realized that the best thing to do under such circumstances was to speak about their feelings, but most were uncomfortable doing so and worried about hurting the host family's feelings. As a result, students often tried to solve problems by themselves or would talk about their dissatisfactions with friends. They did not feel that it was wrong to talk about the family to others, because in Japan third-party involvement in problems is not usually frowned upon. Some students found it easier to write a note about a problem to a host family member in order to avoid direct confrontation. They did not perceive their English ability, or lack thereof, to be strongly related to this issue. The students indicated (in responding to the item ranked 15th) that they had difficulty accepting criticism given them by the host family, but they admitted that such criticism was good for them because they wanted to know exactly what was expected of them. They did not like it, however, if the host family criticized Japan.

In general, there were few problems regarding the students' relationship with the host parents; the related items ranked 36th and 44th. The same was true with the host children of the opposite sex, which ranked 40th. However, getting along with the host children of the same sex as the student posed many difficulties, as shown by its ranking in 5th place. One student changed families because of an inability

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[7] The standard deviation was 1.9.

to get along with same-sex host children. Many stated, "My host sister is jealous of the attention I receive." One student wrote (under the item ranked 33rd) that she no longer talked to the host family about Japanese things because the host child of the same sex felt left out of the conversation. Often students were placed in families where there was a child of the same sex and about the same age. Many of the students, however wrote, "My interests and life styles are very different from those of my host sister (or brother)." They also felt that they were expected to get along well with this host child, and this put great pressure on them.

Most students discussed their relationships with the host families when writing about establishing a dependency relationship (*amae*) with someone. It was not surprising that this caused the students much difficulty (the related item ranked 6th) because, as many Japanologists feel, *amae* is "a key concept for understanding Japanese personality structure."[8] The word *amae* is the noun form of the verb *amaeru*, "an intransitive verb that means 'to depend and presume upon another's benevolence'."[9] This difference between Japanese and Westerners

> is an attitude that begins with physical and psychic dependence for gratification on the mother and grows into psychic dependence for gratification by being enveloped in the warmth of the group and receiving its approval. The child develops an expectation of understanding indulgence from the mother but also an acceptance of her authority, and in time this attitude becomes expanded into an acceptance of the authority of the surrounding milieu and a need for and dependence on this broader social approval.[10]

A brief look at typical Japanese child-rearing techniques reveals much about this concept: The child is intentionally spoiled by the mother, seldom left alone or with baby sitters, and allowed to sleep and bathe with the parents until adolescence. "The result, not surprisingly, is a degree of dependence, especially on the mother, that would be unusual in the West."[11] These feelings create a sense of dependency on the part of the person who extends *amae* and create a sense of obligation on the part of the person who receives this *amae*. This fostering of dependence and obligation runs counter to the American ideals of independence and individual decision-making. Thus, the

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[8] Doi, L. Takeo. "Amae." In Takie S. Lebra & William P. Lebra (eds.), *Japanese Culture and Behavior*. University Press of Hawaii: Honolulu, 1974. p. 145.

[9] *Ibid.*

[10] Reischauer, *op. cit.*, p. 141.

[11] *Ibid.*

Japanese AFS students could not exhibit the behavior taught to them since earliest childhood if they wished to gain social approval and therefore satisfy their need for positive affect. In the U.S. they were not rewarded for depending a great deal on others; their desire for authority was often interpreted by host families as being a lack of initiative and an inability to make their own decisions. The students expressed great loneliness because they did not have anyone in America towards whom they could *amaeru*. Many responded to this item by the following statements: "I miss my mother very much," and "Even though they are my host family they are unrelated persons after all." Once the students became more used to American society and got involved with some kind of group or club at school, they felt better. There were, however, some students who indicated that they did not want to *amae* to anyone; it is possible that such students may have been especially willing to leave home for a year and to apply to a program like AFS. *Amae*, in any case, is an issue that should be thoroughly explained to all involved in dealing with Japanese students and even to the Japanese exchange students themselves.

Living in a nuclear family was a new experience for some of the students. In Japan it is common to have at least one grandparent in the household. The students had some negative feelings as to the way Americans treat older members of the society; the associated item ranked 43rd. It may be significant that many students stated, "I rarely met old people in America."

Students were often surprised by the relationship between their host parents although this item (ranked 45th) did not pose much difficulty for them. They had not expected the host mother to share authority in the family with the host father, since this is unlike the typical Japanese family where the father has nearly absolute sway in family matters. Students also commented, "I was surprised to see the host father doing housework," something that would be most unusual in a typical Japanese family. Another matter that the students found initially perplexing was seeing the host parents going out to dinner or to a movie together, and kissing or holding each other in front of their children. In Japan a husband and wife typically act less like a pair, in great part because the husband often does not return home until late in the evening and has little time off from his work. Displays of affection, even between a married couple, are seldom seen by the children or public.

In general, remarks about the host parents were positive ones, for example, "They are great people."

While it was not difficult for the students to understand their host parents' relationship to each other, it was difficult for them to comprehend the relationship between the host parents and the host children; the associated item ranked 11th. Frequent comments were: "The children have too much say in family matters"; "The children and parents act just like friends"; "There is no seniority"; and "The children

are spoiled." These comments point to the students' view of a family as being a hierarchy in which children should not question the actions or dictates of the parents.

Fitting in with the Daily Routine in the Host Family

An important aspect of home-life in Japan centers around the study habits of the children. It was difficult for the students to find enough time and an appropriate place to study in the host home. Both questionnaire items pertaining to this issue -- those ranked 12th and 16th -- had mean scores close to 3.0. Students stated that, in comparison to the Japanese environment in which after-school time is meant primarily for studying, the American family relaxed together and socialized more often. Also, because their courses were in English, their second language, they felt that they needed more time than the American students to study. Strong complaints came from the respondents concerning the place where they studied. In Japan nearly every school-aged child has, somewhere in the house, his or her own desk. These desks usually contain many shelves and a built-in light. Many students in this study wrote, "I am expected to study at the kitchen table or on my bed in my host family's home." They also complained of insufficient lighting and of noise from the family television. Host family members often came by to see what they were doing and would ask them why they were studying so much. Thus many students were dissatisfied with the study-environment at the American home but were reluctant to complain about it.

Students were surprised that the host family went to bed early. It is common for high-school students in Japan to stay up until after midnight each night studying. The students wrote (under the item ranked 23rd) that in America they were "the last ones to go to bed." The variation in responses was high. It seems that the students either persisted in their habit of staying up late, often irritating the host family, or reveled in the opportunity to go to bed earlier, thereby causing no friction with the host family. The former group was often asked by the host family to stop studying and go to bed. The latter group made comments such as "I can go to bed by midnight here. It seems like heaven compared to being in Japan."

The typical American family spends more time doing things together than the typical Japanese family. Thus, the Japanese students were sometimes not prepared for often participating in recreation and relaxation with the host family. They wrote, "The activities take away from my study-time," and "I do not always share the host family's enthusiasm for sports." The questionnaire item relating to enjoying the leisure-time activities of the host family, which ranked 31st, had a rather wide variation in response. If the students had similar leisure-time interests, especially in sports, there was little difficulty. If they did not share those interests there were problems.

Many of the host families centered their free time around a sport. In Japanese high schools, physical fitness is not stressed as much as in

U.S. high schools, and families rarely attend, much less participate in, sports events together. This latter point can be, in part, attributed to the long hours and infrequent vacation time of the typical Japanese father. But the students often participated in the host family leisure-time activities even if they did not want to. It was hard for students to refuse invitations, as indicated by the item ranked 14th. For cultural reasons it was difficult for them to say "no" directly and they were afraid that they would not be asked to share future activities if they refused anything.

Getting along with the host families' religious beliefs ranked 46th, indicating that this usually caused little or no difficulty for the students. However, in a few cases, religion caused serious problems. There were 13 students who circled 4 or higher. It is important for Americans who come into close contact with Japanese to know that the concept of religion in Japan is very different from that prevailing in the U.S.A. It is not within the scope of this study to give a comparative description of the two concepts of religion. Suffice it to say that, from most outward appearances, the typical Japanese seem to be indifferent to religion or else very private about their beliefs, except at the start of the New Year, during special festivals, and at ancestral anniversaries. Even if they are devout, Japanese do not feel obligated to visit a shrine or temple regularly. Students living with host families with little or no religious affiliation had no problems adjusting to their attitude. However, those living with host families whose social life centered around religious activities had many problems. For two students such a situation necessitated a family change. Some students enjoyed attending the religious functions of the host families because they could meet people this way. Many, however, felt insincere when attending the services of a faith in which they did not believe and made comments such as "I feel hypocritical."

Eating well is a vital factor in feeling healthy and happy. Since American students often have trouble adjusting to Japanese food when they live in Japan for a year, the questionnaire included an item on diet which ended up ranking 48th. Although some wrote, "I am homesick for my own mother's cooking," most said that the host family's food was delicious. In fact, many found it to be too delicious and were gaining weight. More than one student advised future students to America to lose at least ten pounds before the home-stay experience because they would surely gain that much in the first few months. Except for minor initial uneasiness, the respondents found U.S. table manners to be easy to follow; the corresponding item ranked 51st.

The students perceived little difficulty in doing their assigned household chores, as demonstrated by the item ranked 49th.[12] Often

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[12]Conversely, the host parents saw student assistance with chores as a problem. Many host parents were unhappy that the students did not

they did not know what was expected of them and were glad when they were explicitly told what to do. The assignments varied from family to family, with some students stating, "I have no chores" and others, "I must work very hard." Japanese students, particularly the males, are rarely expected to do household tasks in their home culture. Therefore the author expected that this item would be ranked high in difficulty instead of the low ranking it received.

Most students easily followed the rules and daily routine of the host families; the associated item ranked 34th. Problems soon resolved themselves through experience. Initial difficulties in adjusting to another family's lifestyle are to be expected, especially when the new family is culturally different. It was difficult to get used to the fact that the host mother did not do laundry each day, as is done in Japan. Some students commented, "I need more clothes because my host mother only washes once a week." Other differences centered around the student having to be more self-sufficient. Thus there were statements such as "I have to wake myself up each morning," and "I have to make my own sack lunch." Most of these items are tended to by the mother in a Japanese household.

Using English

Using English, while not perceived as being the most difficult aspect of living in America, as might be expected, did present major problems. This questionnaire item, which ranked 4th, had a mean score .5 below the item ranked 1st. This difference indicates that the students did not blame all their adjustment difficulties on language problems, even though this item's lead position on the questionnaire could have promoted such a response. Many students stated, "I had trouble with my English the first three months," and "I had the most difficulty with spoken English." Although they had all studied English for at least four years and had passed the English examination given by AFS/Japan, they had not had adequate training in oral English. As a result, students felt inferior, frustrated, afraid, and ashamed of making mistakes. "I had to learn that it does not matter if I make a mistake with my English" was a common comment. Some were irritated when Americans made fun of their pronunciation; others were troubled by having to write out what they were trying to say when they were not understood. One student wrote, "It was hard to find people who were patient." The students' lack of fluency in English was an influential

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take the initiative and pitch in with the housework without being asked each time. The results here seem to indicate that the students were not aware that the host families saw this matter as a problem or a source of conflict.

factor in their school life, family life, and in dealing with Americans in general. However, even when specifically discussing their facility in using English, many students wrote that "it was hard to get away from the Japanese way of thinking" and that "cultural differences affected mutual communication."

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OCCASIONAL PAPERS IN INTERCULTURAL LEARNING

is a publication of

AFS International/Intercultural Programs, Inc.
313 East 43rd Street
New York, NY 10017, USA

Editor: Dr. Neal Grove

Associate Editor: Bettina Hansel

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